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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KAMPALA 001096

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [UG](#)

SUBJECT: UGANDA: NATIONAL RESISTANCE MOVEMENT INSIDER SEES  
TROUBLE AHEAD

REF: A. KAMPALA 00946

[B](#). KAMPALA 01044

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Aaron Sampson for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) "Captain" Mike Mukula, disgraced former Ugandan Health Minister and current National Resistance Movement (NRM) vice-chairman for eastern Uganda, warned that the 2011 presidential elections will be worse than the deeply flawed 2006 presidential contest. Mukula, whose political reputation was battered by the 2006 Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) scandal, said the September 10-12 riots provided a brief preview of one potential election scenario. He also said President Museveni's popularity was decreasing within the NRM, and speculated that Museveni may be interested in setting up his son, Muhoozi, as dauphin. Mukula said Museveni ultimately listens to only two countries - the U.S. and the U.K. - and urged the U.S. to pressure Museveni to reinstate presidential term limits. Mukula himself, however, hopes to run for president in 2016. End Summary.

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The Many Lives of "Captain" Mike  
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[2](#). (C) An ethnic Iteso from Soroti District in eastern Uganda, Mukula's training as a commercial pilot in Texas earned him the sobriquet "Captain". He has managing interests in the Voice of Teso radio station, the Soroti Inn, United Airlines (Uganda) Ltd., Voice Media, and Riham Biscuits. Mukula prefaced his luncheon discussion with the Mission with a detailed run-down of his accomplishments to date. This included his personal role in improving Uganda's health indicators while serving as Health Minister from 2001 to 2006, participation in a counter terrorism course in Israel in 2002, and his subsequent organization of the Arrow Boys militia to push the Lord's Resistance Army out of Teso region in 2003. Mukula said he was working on a correspondence PhD in Philosophy at a South African university, had attended Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and was currently writing a book on corruption in Africa - a topic he claims he is the first to examine.

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The "Fall Guy"  
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[3](#). (C) Mukula lost his Cabinet post in 2006 and was briefly imprisoned in 2007 after being accused of diverting USD 1.5 million from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) program to NRM coffers. Describing himself as Museveni's "fall guy," Mukula blamed his involvement in the GAVI scandal on Museveni's need to placate international donors concerned about corruption, and his own rising popularity as evidenced by a newspaper poll that

listed Mukula as more popular with the NRM faithful than the President. He claimed that most of the missing GAVI funds were used by First Lady Janet Museveni. Although he said he understood the political calculations that ended, at least for the time being, his political career, Mukula underscored the political nature of his downfall by confiding that he has been unable to leave the country since his passport was confiscated three years ago.

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Museveni and the NRM  
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¶4. (C) Now the NRM's vice-chairman for eastern Uganda and a key member of Museveni's re-election campaign, Mukula complained that there is no separation between the NRM and Ugandan state institutions. He called the military Uganda's "fourth estate" and said Museveni regards the army as his personal political party. Mukula highlighted the complete dominance of Museveni's Banyankole ethnic group throughout the government, military, and business community, and asserted that the NRM now serves as nothing more than platform for the President, springing to life only during election campaigns.

¶5. (C) Mukula claimed to have shared his view of the NRM's degeneration with Museveni directly, along with warnings that support for Museveni and the NRM is slipping. Mukula said Museveni had hoped to organize an internal party primary to select the NRM's presidential candidate but quickly scuttled the idea after realizing that his popularity within the NRM is slipping. Mukula named Ugandan Vice President Gilbert

KAMPALA 00001096 002 OF 003

Bukenya, an ethnic Baganda, as the NRM's most popular leader. He said Museveni kept Bukenya on as his Vice President to keep tabs on Bukenya's potential presidential ambitions.

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2011 Presidential Contest  
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¶6. (C) Describing the recent riots as "Uganda's 9/11," Mukula said they provided a small glimpse of what could happen in 2011 if things go seriously off-track. Noting the dominance of Museveni's ethnic group in all government institutions, he warned of serious reprisals from groups long excluded from power.

¶7. (C) When asked how he thought the 2011 elections would compare to the flawed 2006 presidential contest, Mukula said the 2011 elections would be much worse. He said Museveni's re-election team believed Museveni would get 10 percentage points less than he received in 2006, giving him only 49 percent of the vote. Mukula said the recent political moves made by Museveni - from pandering to ethnic Banyoro along Lake Albert (ref. A), to the recognition of the Rwenzururu Kingdom in southwestern Uganda and the decision to support the minority Banyala's quest for autonomy from the Buganda Kingdom (ref. B) - were all designed to obtain the two percentage points needed to push Museveni from 49 to 51 percent during the first round of voting in 2011.

¶8. (C) Mukula conceded that northern and central Uganda would likely go to opposition candidates in free and fair elections. He downplayed talk of First Lady Janet Museveni's presidential ambitions, saying that she preferred to remain the power behind the throne, shielded from public criticism and scrutiny, as she lacked the stamina and focus needed to run a presidential campaign. Mukula said Museveni was increasingly patterning himself after Robert Mugabe and wants to position his son, Lieutenant Colonel Muhoozi Kainerugaba Museveni, as his eventual successor. Muhoozi returned from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in mid-2008 to assume command of the new Special Forces, a still-murky component - or potentially entirely separate unit - of the

praetorian Presidential Guard Brigade comprised of all the PGB's elite, technical, and specialized non-infantry capabilities. Noting that Muhoozi may still be too young to mount a credible presidential bid in 2016, Mukula again volunteered that he had presidential ambitions of his own for 2016.

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Regional Leadership  
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¶9. (C) Pointing that Uganda alone among the East African Community (EAC) does not have presidential term limits, Mukula also said distrust of Museveni was one of the main factors limiting any progress towards a regional political federation. He said none of the regional presidents were willing to jeopardize their relations with Uganda by criticizing Museveni. Mukula added that he is a close friend of Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga - Odinga reportedly stayed at Mukula's home during a recent visit to Kampala - and said Odinga keeps up a friendly public persona with Museveni despite extreme private distrust.

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Uganda-U.S. Relations  
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¶10. (C) Mukula urged the U.S. to pressure Museveni to reinstate presidential term limits. He listed Somalia as an example of Museveni's efforts to remain indispensable to the U.S. Mukula also speculated that Uganda's support to southern Sudan also enabled Museveni to preserve strong ties with the U.S.

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Comment: Self-Interested but Still Interesting  
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¶11. (C) While Mukula's honesty and motives are open to question, and his descriptions of Museveni's internal calculations reflect his own self-interest, he is nevertheless one of the few NRM insiders willing to criticize both Museveni and internal NRM dynamics. However, his observations about Museveni's slipping popularity within the NRM and Vice President Bukenya's expanding internal support are worth noting. His views may offer some insight into the key battleground region of eastern Uganda and Museveni's

KAMPALA 00001096 003 OF 003

re-election strategy as the 2011 elections approach.  
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